3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies – Vol 21(2): 103 – 114

Foreigner and *Foreign* in English-language Newspapers in Malaysia: A Frame-semantic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the usage of two morphologically related words, foreign and foreigner, in two major daily English-language newspapers circulated widely in Malaysia. On the basis of 285 tokens, the study shows a striking tendency indicating that they do not share exactly the same semantic content. While foreign is used neutrally to modify things or people from a country other than Malaysia, foreigner is found frequently in four negative contexts (running illegal businesses, entering Malaysia illegally, bringing diseases to Malaysia, and misusing marriage in Malaysia). Using Fillmore's frame as a theoretical construct, the study seeks to explain why foreigner tends to correlate with negative connotations, while foreign does not. The central idea is that the PERSON *attribute attached to foreigner invokes positive/neutral and negative values, and that the semantics of foreigner and foreign incorporates our schematic knowledge about everyday life. In conclusion, these results are stated to shed light on 'the changing tenor of English' in Malaysia.*

Keywords: English-language newspapers in Malaysia; foreign; foreigner; frame; PERSON *attribute*

INTRODUCTION

The term *foreigner* is defined as "a person born in or coming from a country other than one's own" (New Oxford Dictionary of English 1998, p. 718). In its second sense, it also means "a person not belonging to a particular place or group; a stranger or outsider". The dictionary adds that a basic criterion for regarding someone as a foreigner is that the person speaks a certain language in a country where it is not spoken. By this logic, Americans who speak English are not foreigners in Britain. The adjectival form *foreign* (as in *foreign language*) carries wider senses; it is not restricted to a person, but modifies virtually any type of noun. The *New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines *foreign* as "of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one's own" (p. 718). In its second sense, *foreign* is defined as "strange and unfamiliar". In brief, the definitions of the two words resemble each other. The two extracts shown below, taken from the *Guardian*, a daily national newspaper in the UK, present *foreigner* in the heading and its adjectival form *foreign* in the body text. The first line is the headline. The key words are marked in bold for emphasis:

1. '**Foreigner**' helped build Terracotta Army
   Chinese archaeologists have unearthed evidence that a **foreign** worker helped build the Terracotta Army mausoleum, the resting place of the country's first emperor, who died more than 2,200 years ago.
   (28 June 2006)

2. Being an only child, I felt like a **foreigner**
   You were different, if you were an only child in the baby boom of the 1960s. At my Catholic primary school, the only other "only" was German, but I felt just as **foreign**. People thought you were spoilt, or just weird. They were still clinging, somewhere deep in their sibling-rich psyches, to the belief Granville Stanley Hall laid out in his 1896 study Of Peculiar and Exceptional Children that being an only child was "a disease in itself."
   (6 April 2013)

The meanings of *foreigner* and *foreign* in the first extract match the first definitions of both words (coming from a country other than one's own). Both convey that non-Chinese people were apparently involved in the construction of the country's historical monument. By contrast, the meaning of *foreigner* and *foreign* in the second extract matches the second definition of both words (not belonging to a particular place or group). The author of the second article felt like a stranger or an outsider because of her difference to others. In extracts, these two words, *foreigner* and *foreign*, behave similarly to the extent that they share the same semantic content, the difference being simply the form.

An intriguing fact about the use of *foreigner* and *foreign* in Malaysian English-language newspapers is that they do not always share exactly the same semantic content. While *foreigner* carries positive meaning in certain specific domains (knowledge and tourism), it is employed, in most cases in various contexts, quite negatively, its meaning close to *immigrant*, referring particularly to people from third-world countries entering Malaysia, often illegally, who remain in the country and cause problems for Malaysian society (*New Sunday Times*, 19 May 2013). Although not all foreigners are regarded as immigrants in Malaysian society, the word *foreigner* is also sometimes taken to represent people from countries other than Malaysia who enjoy fewer rights than Malaysians due to their lack of citizenship. This concept is mirrored in an article headlined "No Foreigners, Just Malaysians" (*The Star,* 3 May 2014), in which a Brazilian football player is reported as being rejected as a representative of Malaysia. This negative image described in Malaysian English-language newspapers goes far beyond the dictionary meaning of the words along the lines we have observed above. In Malaysia, there have been studies on the use of language in newspaper articles. For example, a recent study conducted by Gill, Keong, Bolte and Ramiah (2012) highlighted the ideological significance of the use of the English language, or more concretely, the use of ideologically contested lexical items and their combinations. However, no study in a Malaysian context (based on a search of Malaysian journals) has looked into the use of newspaper vocabulary from the perspective of frame-based knowledge.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it explores the ways in which *foreigner* and *foreign* are employed in Malaysian English-language newspapers, on the basis of a dataset compiled. Second, it seeks to explain why *foreigner* has a negative meaning more often than does *foreign*. Fillmore's (1982) and Barsalou's (1992) conceptions of a frame will be applied to the data at hand. The central idea is that the semantics of *foreigner* and *foreign* incorporates our schematic knowledge about everyday life. This knowledge constitutes a frame by drawing upon information provided by the words and the surrounding text.

CONCEPT OF THE FRAME

The theoretical framework on which this study bases its analysis derives from the work of two scholars in two interrelated fields, cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology. On the

one hand, the frame developed by the late Charles Fillmore in the 1970s and 1980s will be adopted; on the other, Barsalou's (1992) notions of 'attributes' and 'values' will be employed to look into the internal structure of the frame. Scholars working on frames are interested in meaning or meaning construction on the basis of our encyclopaedic knowledge of word meaning. Reference to encyclopaedic knowledge signals that in order to describe meaning, linguists give priority to our ability to experience things in everyday life and to access this experience. Before Fillmore, word meaning was analysed relying heavily on semantic features or truth conditions (Croft & Cruse 2004). To illustrate, the word *bachelor*, to adopt a classical example (Lakoff 1987), is defined by the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) as "a man who is not and has never been married". In a traditional approach, *bachelor* was assigned features such as [MALE] and [UNMARRIED] within a paradigm in order to capture the meaning. Fillmore's interest was in the conceptual structure that naturally emerges when words are used for the purpose of communication. More recently, Gawron (2011) wrote in the same spirit that "[f]rames are conceptual structures that provide context for elements of interpretation; their primary role in an account of text understanding is to explain how our text interpretations can (validly) leap far beyond what the text literally says" (p. 667).

Frames can be looked at more closely by way of Fillmore's (1982) and Barsalou's (1992) proposals. A frame is understood as assumed background knowledge, based on which word meaning is determined. Fillmore declared that "a frame is a kind of 'scene schematization'" (p. 116). The idea is that no one can know the actual meaning of a word without establishing conceptual access to the schematised scene, also called "a knowledge structure" (Evans & Green 2006, p. 222). To put it differently, the word evokes the frame, and the user of a language concurrently has access to culturally specific 'stereotypes' (Gawron 2011, p. 667), or, in Barsalou's terms, 'attributes' and 'values' (see also Evans & Green 2006, p. 223–224). For example, the word 'restaurant' invokes a knowledge structure consisting of stereotypes such as 'waitresses', 'customers', 'tables', 'menus', etc. These stereotypes are synonymous with Barsalou's attributes. An attribute is, for Barsalou, "a concept that describes an *aspect* [emphasis added] of at least some category members" (1992, p. 30). If *bird* and *vacation* are frame-based concepts, it is clear that their attributes, such as *colour* (for *bird*) and *location* (for *vacation*), are built-in aspects. Values are subordinate concepts that represent subtypes of an attribute. To take the car frame, as Barsalou does (1992, p. 30), the central category CAR has immediate attributes such as DRIVER, FUEL, ENGINE, TRANSMISSION, and WHEELS. These are seen to be the immediate constituents of a car. They then relate to values in such a way that all of them form a superordinate and subordinate hierarchy (see also Evans & Green 2006, p. 224). Let us take the attribute DRIVER, which relates to two values such as LIZ and PHIL, who are individual drivers. Values are always more specific than attributes; that is, they are more "basic-level" (Taylor 2009, p. 50), and thus values themselves can logically be further specified (e.g. "Liz in America" and "Liz in Europe") as far as they become more concrete so that they are conceptualised/visualised easily. Note that a concept becomes an attribute only when it is an aspect of a larger whole or the assumed background knowledge. If a driver (e.g. Liz) is considered in isolation without reference to a car, it is just a concept.

Another aspect of a frame is the relationships between attributes and values. Let us take the BIRD frame with three attributes (SIZE, COLOUR, BEAK), as illustrated in Barsalou (1992, pp. 45, 48). Each attribute is assigned two values (small/large, brown/white, straight/curved). If there is a co-occurrence between values and attributes, the sentence *When Hank came home, a bird was sitting on his porch*, which is silent about any characteristic of the bird, can invite an inference about it in the reader's mind. For example, a white bird (COLOUR attribute and 'white' value). The co-occurrence relation can also take place between two values. For example, when 'white colour' (under the COLOUR attribute) concurs with

'curved beak' (under the BEAK attribute), the sentence *When Hank came home, a white bird was sitting on his porch* evokes the idea of a white bird with a curved beak. In short, co-occurrence relations among the constituents of the frame motivate the speaker to create ideas that do not surface in the sentence.

Since frames can allow basic-level values at the bottom of their structure, one can assume that the construction of a frame takes into consideration socio-cultural conventions or norms exercised in human society. Given this, frames are the concept-bound, culturally specific whole with internal organisations. Let us illustrate how this operates in some examples. An understanding of the word *breakfast* invokes a frame or a social world in which people have three meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, per day. An understanding of *Tuesday* invokes an entire week as a frame consisting of seven days. Seven days from Monday to Sunday make up a set of attributes representing that frame. As Gawron (2011, p. 668) also remarked, an understanding of both *breakfast* and *Tuesday* may not need to entail understanding of other meals or days. The relationship between *Tuesday* and *the week* crucially determines the meaning of *Tuesday* (that is, the second day of the week), but any other day (say, *Friday*) will not help determine the meaning of *Tuesday*. These examples imply that co-occurrence relations may not always take place. An understanding of *bachelor*, as mentioned earlier, evokes a human society in which "certain expectations about marriage and marriageable age obtain" (Lakoff 1987, p. 70). In other words, not all unmarried male adults can be categorised as bachelors. As Lakoff (1987, p. 70) further elaborated, "[m]ale participants in long-term unmarried couplings would not ordinarily be described as bachelors; a boy abandoned in the jungle and grown to maturity away from contact with human society would not be called a bachelor; [Pope Francis] is not properly thought of as a bachelor." A frame-based explanation of *bachelor* guarantees that a man can be categorised as a bachelor only when he is unmarried or has never been married in a social world in which he is expected or eligible to be married. A set of attributes, namely, immediate constituents of *bachelor*, such as "adult", "unmarried man", "eligibility", "social expectation to get married" can be proposed. The sentence *My 50-year-old brother is looking for a wife* evokes specific values (e.g., "he's on his own", "he's old enough for marriage", "he's past marriageable age", "he's eligible for marriage", "he desires marriage") that may cut across the attributes proposed above, which invites the inference that my 50-year-old brother is a bachelor.

METHODS

The data were collected from two major daily English-language newspapers distributed widely in Malaysia: the *New Straits Times* (including the *New Sunday Times*) and *The Star*. The words searched for were the noun *foreigner* and its adjectival form *foreign*. Examples were sourced through the search engines of the newspapers' websites, though some were taken from printed versions. Since the focus of this study was on the "local perspective" of the semantics of *foreigner* and *foreign*, the selected articles all concerned local matters; stories on overseas countries reported by foreign press agencies or newspapers (AFP, Reuters, the *Independent*) were excluded. Because the purpose was to investigate the contemporary vocabulary reflected in present-day Malaysian English-language newspapers and not to undertake a comparative study, only current examples were searched for. These two morphologically similar forms were taken as the object of research for both empirical and conceptual reasons. The first is empirical in the sense that the two words did not behave identically in newspaper articles, which aroused the researchers' curiosity. The second reason derives from the first in that this empirical fact led to the assumption that the contrast between the two, which resemble each other closely at the dictionary level but behave

differently in newspaper articles, would offer insights into the structure of frame-based knowledge. In the following section, representative examples will be demonstrated.

MATERIALS

Examples in articles published between December 2013 and May 2014 were searched.[1] The newspaper articles in which *foreigner* and *foreign* appear deal with various topics concerning people coming from countries outside Malaysia. We intended to collect at least 100 tokens for each word, which was considered sufficient to conduct a qualitative analysis. As presented in Tables 3 and 4, 104 and 181 examples of *foreigner* and *foreign* were collected, respectively. In the following two sections, representative examples of both will be presented.

EXAMPLES OF *FOREIGNER*

As shown in (a) to (g) below, token of *foreigner* were classified and summarised according to seven key concepts. The first four (a–d) correlate with negative meaning and the fifth (e) can be either be negative or neutral, whereas the last two (f, g) impart positive meaning; *foreigner* here refers to a person coming from another country (see Introduction) to visit the country as a tourist or a professional.

a. Running illegal businesses
b. Illegal entry to Malaysia
c. Bringing diseases to Malaysia
d. Misusing marriage with locals
e. Purchasing property
f. Visiting Malaysia as tourists
g. Bringing knowledge to Malaysia

Representative examples are shown from (3) to (9) below, each of which tallies with the concepts mentioned above from (a) to (g).

3. Fifteen people, including four **foreigners**, were apprehended during an operation against illegal online gambling here.
   (*The Star*, 21 February 2014)
4. The Immigration Department has detained another 39 **foreigners** in its crackdown on illegal immigrants here.
   (*The Star*, 8 February 2014)
5. The influx of foreign workers is among the reasons for the spread of tuberculosis in the country. Based on statistics, about 18,000 cases were reported in 2010. The figure rose to 20,000 in 2011, with 1,600 fatalities recorded. Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said among the efforts to monitor the spread of the disease was making it compulsory for **foreigners** wishing to work in Malaysia undergo health screenings. He said out of 30,000 **foreigners**, 20,000 had failed the health screenings carried out by his ministry so far.
   (*New Straits Times*, 30 December 2013)
6. A **foreigner** who wanted to become a permanent resident in the country began giving his wife the cold shoulder as soon as he had achieved his goal.
   (*New Straits Times*, 21 January 2014)

7. "There is no doubt that many **foreigners** will be interested to acquire land here," he told reporters after launching the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of affordable homes in Taman Penawar Harmoni here yesterday.
   (*The Star*, 19 May 2014)
8. As city folk headed for their hometowns for the Chinese New Year, the capital saw an influx of **foreigners** on the first day of the festive season. They congregated at tourist spots such as Dataran Merdeka, Suria KLCC and Petaling Street to enjoy the public holiday with friends.
   (*New Straits Times*, 12 February 2014)
9. Six non-governmental organisations urged the Home Ministry on Friday to investigate plans by opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and three Pakatan Rakyat Members of Parliament to bring in **foreigners** to brief the Dewan Rakyat regarding the purchase of Scorpene submarines by the navy … Young Journalists Club president Dzulkarnain Mohd Taib said this was necessary to determine the opposition's agenda in inviting three **foreign** lawyers to brief the Dewan Rakyat on court proceedings in France on the purchase.
   (*The Star*, 5 October 2012)

EXAMPLES OF *FOREIGN*

The adjectival form *foreign* modifies the noun that follows it, and there is no case in which it is used predicatively. All examples in which *foreign* occurs, as shown in (10) to (14) below, fit the dictionary meaning "of/from a country other than one's own". The sense assigned to the combination "foreign N" (N stands for noun) is, in most cases, neutral, that is, mute about the negative or positive quality of the referent of the head noun. (12) is an exception as it refers to foreign workers residing illegally in the country. The most frequently used head noun is *worker(s)*. Examples were extracted when they only describe 'person' or 'people', although they often included inanimate objects (e.g., *interest*, *participation*, *investment*). The letter "N" refers to a person who is a foreigner or regarded as foreign. Proper nouns such as 'Foreign Minister' or 'Deputy Foreign Minister' were discarded because of their reference to a specific person.

10. Marine turtles continue to lure **foreign** tourists to Terengganu. The magic weaved by these reptiles has seen a marked influx of **foreign** tourists to the state.
    (*The Star*, 24 April 2014)
11. Naim Holdings Bhd has obtained permits from the authorities to hire more than 1,000 **foreign** workers for its various projects.
    (*The Star*, 1 March 2014)
12. On Jan 21, just after midnight, the Home Ministry will go on a nationwide operation to smoke out *illegal* **foreign** workers from their hideouts.
    (*New Straits Times*, 10 January 2014)

13. I feel compelled to write this letter, hoping there will be an improvement in the visa service and its regulation in the country for **foreign** students.
(*New Straits Times*, 14 February 2014)
14. This, he said, would give developers more time to sell their residential properties, which had been offered to **foreign** buyers at the previous minimum ceiling price of RM500,000 per unit.
(*The Star*, 2 March 2014)

A CLOSER LOOK AT POSITIVE/NEUTRAL AND NEGATIVE USAGE

The study set out to answer is why *foreigner* tends to correlate with negative connotations, while *foreign* does not. In order to tackle this question, both *foreigner* and *foreign* were classified depending on the linguistic environment in which they occur. That is, they were isolated depending on parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, verbs) and synonyms that are associated with them. Gawron (2011, p. 667) quotes Fillmore's example sentence *We never open our presents until morning.* Although Christmas is not mentioned overtly, the elements of the sentence tell us that this is the context. That is, words in the text exert influence on the interpretation of a particular concept. By analysing the text surrounding *foreigner* or *foreign*, we expect to discover a similar effect. The point we are making is that co-occurring words contribute to creating this effect. *Foreigner* and *foreign* are sometimes modified by a prenominal adjective which often provides the background for interpretation (*illegal*, *errant*, *more hardworking*). Nouns serve as head nouns specifying the type of person from overseas (*drug pushers*, *students*, *workers*). Predicative adjectives (including passive forms) are used to describe physical states in which people are found (N *brutally murdered*, N *stabbed to death*). Verbs refer to actions in which people are engaged or that happen to them (N *visits the state*, *lure* N). Synonyms reproduce *foreigner* or *foreign* with different items that share a similar meaning (*immigrant*, *international*). Overall, the positive/neutral or negative usage of both words is ultimately determined by the collective information adjacent to the word. Consider once again the negative (3) and positive readings (9) of *foreigner*. The difference attached to them arises from the information delivered by the surrounding text. For the former, the synonym *illegal immigrant*, which elaborates on *foreigners*, is decisive. For the latter, the positive verbal phrase *brief the Dewan Rakyat* "to brief the authorities of the council", of which *foreigners* is the subject, is the key. In a similar vein, we have seen that *foreign workers* carries both negative (5 [1st line], 12) and positive/neutral meaning (11). This distinction also arises through the surrounding text.

Tables 1 and 2 present a summary of this investigation. It is clear that *foreigner* tends to be qualified more often by negative elements, such as illegal employment and activities often leading to death, whereas although *foreign* can invite a negative adjective (*illegal*) and occurs in negative predication (fN *nabbed*), it accepts a wide variety of positive/neutral concepts such as foreign exchange, investment, sports, tourism, employment bringing knowledge, and visits of students or officials from outside the country. Tables 3 and 4 tabulate the tokens of *foreigner* and *foreign* and their frequency in respective newspapers. Since 'positive' and 'neutral' are hard to separate sharply, they are put together in the same column. However, the rule of thumbs is as follows. Neutral refers to general statements made about people who come particularly from third-world countries. By contrast, positive denotes that people from outside, regardless of their country, bring about advantage, knowledge-based or technological, to the country.

TABLE 1. Co-occurrence with *foreigner*

Category		Representative Examples	
		Positive/Neutral	**Negative**
adjective	prenominal	----	illegal, errant, suspect, dead
	predicative	more hardworking	N brutally murdered, N stabbed to death, N found dead, N arrested, N detained, N deported
verb		N brief, N subsided, N employed, N obtain good medical service	N forsake their wives, N want to become a permanent resident
synonym		----	illegal immigrant, immigrant, foreign worker

TABLE 2. Co-occurrence with *foreign*

Category	Representative Examples	
	Positive/Neutral	**Negative**
noun	athletes, ambassadors, buyers, coach, investors, lawyers, players, sellers, students, tourists, workers	domestic helpers, drug pushers, guards, immigrants, maids, nationals, taxi drivers, players, security guards, traders, women, workers
adjective	----	illegal fN, fN nabbed during a raid, fN charged with drug trafficking
verb	lure fN, hire fN, welcome fN, employ fN with better welfare, fN visit the state, fN hire, fN buy, fN fielded, fN invest	fN used forged medicine rampantly, fN killed, fN possess illegal travel documents
synonym	international	----

**(fN stands for "foreign N")*

TABLE 3. Tokens and frequency of positive/neutral and negative usage in *The Star*

The Star							
Foreigner				**Foreign**			
Positive/Neutral		**Negative**		**Positive/Neutral**		**Negative**	
15	34.09%	29	65.91%	49	58.33%	35	41.67%
44 tokens				84 tokens			

TABLE 4. Tokens and frequency of positive/neutral and negative usage in the *New Straits Times*

The New Straits Times							
Foreigner				**Foreign**			
Positive/Neutral		**Negative**		**Positive/Neutral**		**Negative**	
16	26.7%	44	73.3%	52	53.6%	45	46.4%
60 tokens				97 tokens			

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section summarises the findings. First, negative meaning is attached to *foreigner* much more often than it is to *foreign* (Tables 3 and 4). Second, in both cases, positive/neutral or negative meaning is ultimately decided by the elements incorporated in the surrounding text (Tables 1 and 2). This strongly suggests that lexical content is determined conclusively above word level; that is, how the words are used in context. This section aims to recapture these findings under the perspective of the frame in two ways.

First, *foreigner* and *foreign* should invoke two different frames in Malaysian society which is that society identifies *foreigner* and *foreign* with two concepts that characterise them. The *foreigner* frame obtains attributes reflecting that a foreigner is a person and what a foreigner does or how he or she is perceived in Malaysian society, as illustrated by Figure 1.

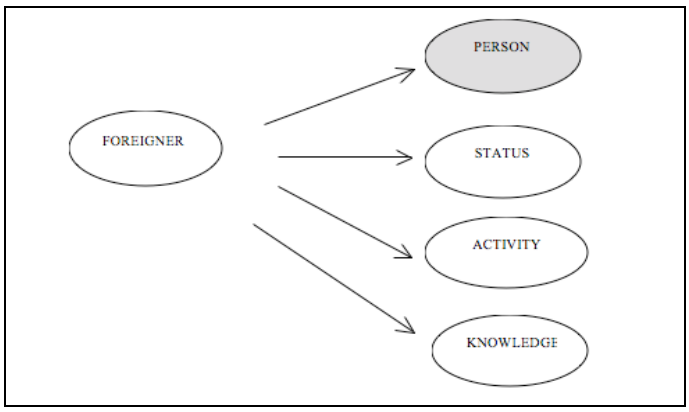

FIGURE 1. FOREIGNER frame

The attribute PERSON is central to the category FOREIGNER and three other attributes arise from the presence of this attribute due to the co-occurrence principle we discussed earlier. The centrality of PERSON can be subscribed to the suffix *-er* as an agentive marker.

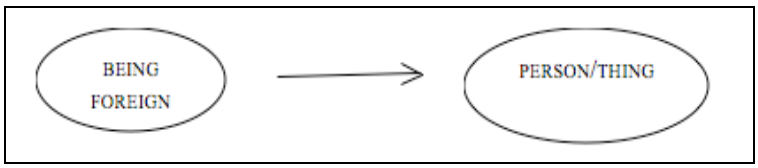

FIGURE 2. FOREIGN frame

Figure 2 presents a frame for foreign in which the category BEING FOREIGN has only one attribute, which includes PERSON and THING. As it is not specific to PERSON, it does not yield further attributes like the FOREIGNER frame. The absence of the PERSON attribute is put down to the absence of the agentive suffix.

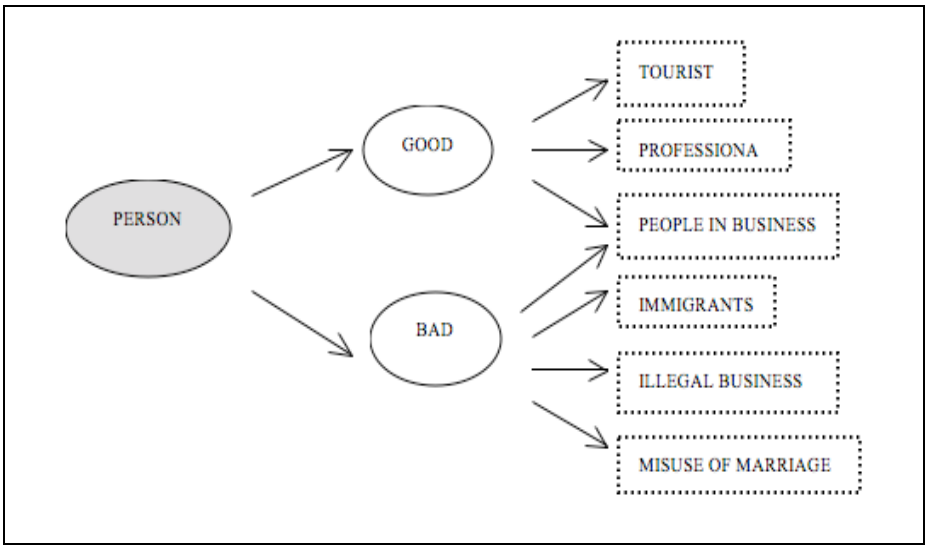

FIGURE 3. Values subordinate to PERSON

Figure 3 spotlights the PERSON attribute of the FOREIGNER frame, which becomes more specific with the addition of values that are 'basic-level', as noted earlier, indicated by the dotted boxes. The value PEOPLE IN BUSINESS can be both positive/neutral and negative (see the subsection on examples of *foreigner*). An intermediate level is occupied by GOOD and BAD attributes. GOOD PERSON can be characterised depending on the different social status of individuals (professionals, tourists). Likewise, BAD PERSON can be characterised depending on how the person enters the country or what he/she does in Malaysia (immigrants, illegal business, misuse of marriage). Figure 3 thus shows that negative and positive distinctions are integral to PERSON.

We posit that GOOD and BAD are emotional attributes that are aligned with Wierzbicka's classification (1999, pp. 279–281). We agree that emotions are expressed either positively or negatively; they are in a certain way 'valenced'. Quoting Plutchik (1994), Wierzbicka further declares that emotions are by nature 'bipolar'. Although emotions are not always linguistically realised as good or bad only, they are subsumed conceptually within 'good' or 'bad', the point relevant to our analysis. Admitting that positive or negative affect is linked to the concepts 'good' or 'bad', respectively, Kagan (2007, p. 11) considers it to make sense that these attributes are ultimately ethical; that is, they do not assume the same cognizance universally, implying that being good or bad is decided culturally or else upon people's beliefs or attitudes.

The study revealed that senses assigned to *foreigner* and *foreign* are constructed above word level. This finding concurs with Gawron (2011), who asserts that word senses can be introduced by "patterns among the facts the text establishes" (p. 667). The structure of the frame can paint a picture of this empirical fact. Co-occurrence relations among attributes and values should optimise the utility of the frame. For example, TOURISTS can correspond with sightseeing, a typical activity, which comes under the attribute ACTIVITY, forming the concept GOOD PERSON. A sentence such as "the capital saw an influx of foreigners the first day of the festive season" (see [8]) invites the reader to infer a positive image of foreigners owing to the co-occurrence relations operating above word level. Look at (6) as an example forming the concept BAD PERSON. It is clear that negativity derives from negative senses assigned to neighbouring expressions ("wanted to become a permanent resident", "give the cold shoulder", "had achieved his goal"). These negative values also correlate with the attribute ACTIVITY.

Second, it is possible to counterclaim that the frame-based difference between *foreigner* and *foreign*, as described in the previous paragraph, may reflect the difference in the dictionary meaning of *foreigner* and *foreign*. That is to say, what makes the semantics of *foreigner* negative originates in the person component enshrined in its dictionary meaning (see the Introduction) and its second dictionary meaning, namely, "a stranger or outsider" (see [2]). Caution is in order, however. These points do not need to correlate with a negative connotation because there are some examples in which foreigners have a positive image, as seen just above, precisely because they are strangers and outsiders, including the component of person. Importantly, in addition, *foreign* is also defined as "strange, unfamiliar", as discussed in the Introduction, which means that *foreigner* and *foreign* are not clearly separated from each other at the dictionary level. Viewed this way, dictionary meaning, however likely it may be at first glance, does not in fact explain positive and negative values satisfactorily. Thus, frame-based analysis posited in this paper appears more grounded as it leads us to grasp why semantically similar words, though they differ in form, can generate meaning components that are only ascribable to one word in usage events, that is, when they are actually used.

Summing up, the fact that *foreigner* receives a negative value in most cases is derived from the internal structure of a frame. Discussions in the previous sections indicate that this

particular negativity arises from the equation between arrivals from abroad and 'bad person'. Recall the case of Liz, an individual who is understood as a driver only when she is situated in a car frame. The same relation can be applied to a foreigner, as she is just an individual in her home country, but will be judged on whether she is a good or bad arrival in another culture when seen within the FOREIGNER frame. This conceptual exchange happens because the frame is apparently sensitive to socio-cultural or 'ethical' determination, to borrow Kagan's (2007) term.

CONCLUSION

This paper has investigated the semantics of two morphologically related words, *foreigner* and *foreign*, on the basis of a collection of examples extracted from local English-language newspapers in Malaysia. It has shown that the frame-based approach to the meaning of words can explain why *foreigner* acquires a negative value, while *foreign* normally does not, and how the context plays a part in inferring the negative value of the former. The paper has concluded that the PERSON attribute allows users of a language to equate arrivals from outside with ethically positive/neutral or negative performance. One cannot deny that the use of *foreigner* is proof of the ubiquity of the frames that may reside in Malaysians' minds. The proposed frames do not explain why negative attributes outnumber positive/neutral attributes, but as long as the frame is the socio-cultural construct, the answer is that it echoes expectations in Malaysian society. As reported in sociological studies (Oropesa 2015, Semyonov, Raijman, Tov & Schmidt 2004), the negative impact of the presence of foreigners is apparently a common problem shared by many countries. The core of the problem seems to be the 'differences' foreigners bring with them when they come to a new country. To quote Egharevba (2004, p. 192), "these new arrivals brought with them enormous problems that are cultural, social and economic in nature, for instance, … immigrants' different habits, dress styles, different food and religion". The contribution of the present paper is thus to shed new light on the nature of the problem by looking at it from the perspective of the use of a language.

This finding may further invite the reader to contemplate whether the negative value of *foreigner* correlates with the current status of English in Malaysia. Platt, Weber and Ho. (1987) initiated research on what they dubbed 'New Englishes', varieties of English situated in postcolonial countries. Scholars in this field today share the view that different varieties of New English are developing their own grammar and lexicon (Leimgruber 2013, Schreier 2005). While language change is a long process before an element is admitted to the system of a given language (Itkonen 2008, p. 297), a unique, but subtle, extension we have witnessed in the semantics of *foreigner* and *foreign* (from dictionary to frame-based) may cast light on this new research direction. All in all, the results might illustrate what Ganakumaran Subramaniam (2007) called eight years ago "the changing tenor of English" in Malaysia, the process in which "the English used in environments different from its origin would adjust and change to suit its new environments" (p. 54). If these 'new environments' partake of the frame-based knowledge, as discussed above, the present study, despite its preliminary nature, has shown how deeply our cognitive capacity is incorporated into the use of a language and the creation of new senses. It also hints at its possible link to the research direction in the field of the New Englishes.

ENDNOTES

[1] Example (9) is from a separate collection by the second author. This example is not included in the totals displayed in Tables 3 and 4.

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